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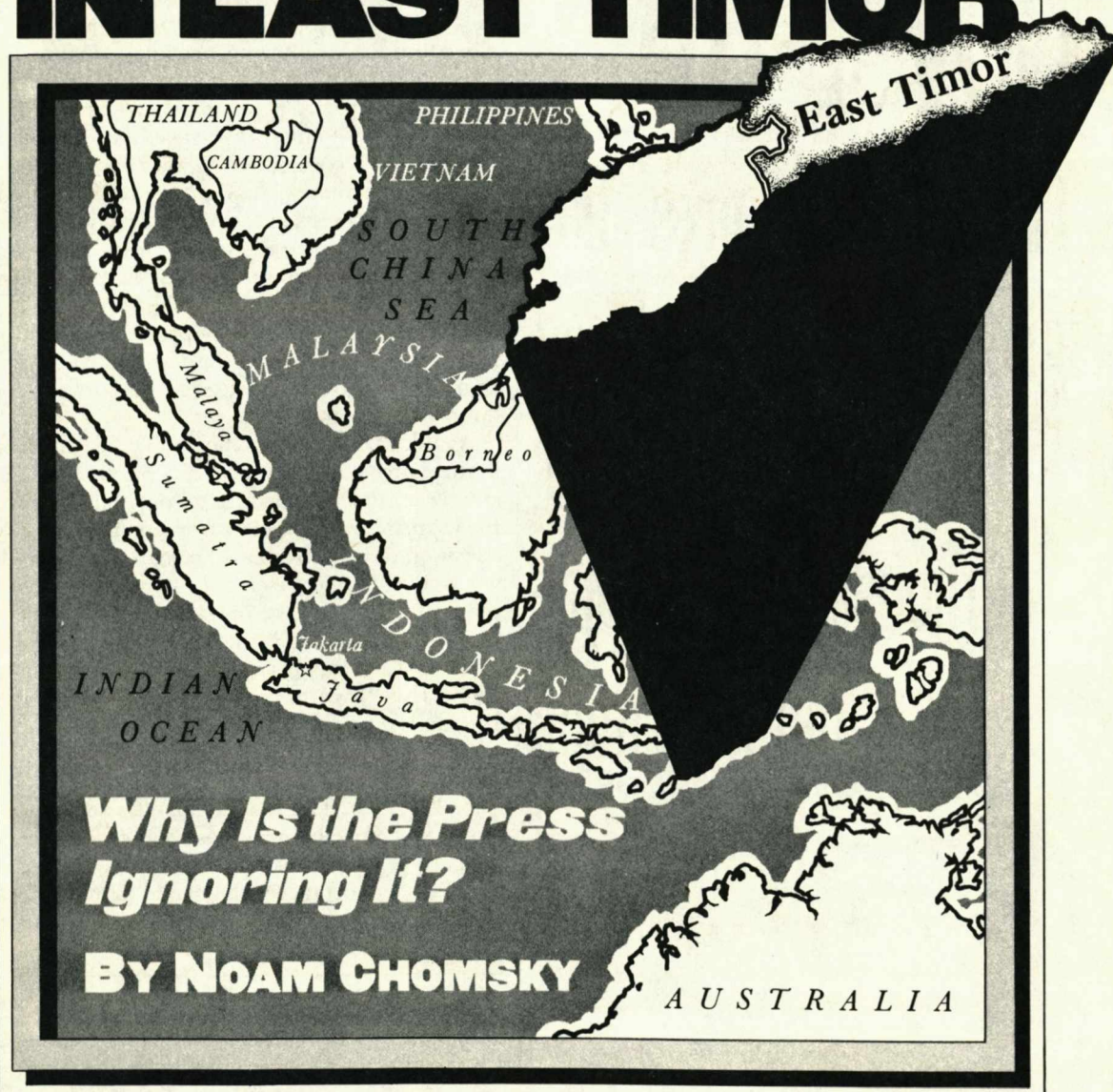
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SLAUGHTER IN EAST TIMOR



EAST TIMOR: The Press Cover-up

The American press has
ignored or whitewashed
Indonesia's slaughter
of thousands of people
in East Timor.

By NOAM CHOMSKY

ON DECEMBER 7, 1975, INDONESIAN military forces invaded East Timor, the former Portuguese colony, capturing the capital city of Dili, the first major step in a war of aggression that has repeatedly been condemned by the United Nations but still continues without respite. The United States surely knew of the impending invasion; it had been widely forecast in the international press, was expected by Australia, and took place immediately after the departure of President Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger from Jakarta—where Kissinger had pointedly told newsmen that “the United States understands Indonesia’s position on the question” of Timor.

Although Indonesia has effectively sealed off East Timor from the outside world, refusing entry even to the International Red Cross, nevertheless reports have filtered out indicating that there have been massive atrocities, with neutral or even pro-Indonesian observers estimating 50,000 to 100,000 people slaughtered, roughly 10 percent of the population. Nevertheless, the American press—indeed, the Western press quite generally—has evaded the issue, or has, with rare exceptions, adhered closely to the position taken by Indonesia and the U.S. government, a position that was expressed very well by Representative J. Herbert Burke, ranking minority member of the House subcommittee on Asian and Pacific affairs, when he wrote that “it is in all our interests to bury the Timor issue quickly and completely.”

At every crucial point, the U.S. government, with the press trailing loyally in its wake, has denied or concealed the atrocities committed by its Indonesian ally and has taken the position that whatever minor improper actions may have occurred in the past, it is now a matter of history and no useful purpose is served by questioning Indonesian control of East Timor. This has made it possible for the United States and its allies to take part in the massacres and repression in East Timor by providing Indonesia with the material support required to carry on its continuing war of aggression, and the ideological support that enables it to do so virtually in secret.

Again, I want to stress the significance of press complicity in these atrocities, unknown to a public that might be sufficiently aroused by the facts to prevent the governments of the industrial democracies from making their decisive contribution to what Shepard Forman, an anthropologist who worked in Timor, described in congressional testimony as the “annihilation of simple mountain people.” I want to stress as well that this is not ancient history. Last October a group of Australians who entered Dili harbor in a disabled yacht saw “frigates, patrol boats, barges crammed with Indonesian soldiers, and many aircraft and helicopters”; they heard explosions in the distance, and “were left without doubts that Dili was still a war zone” (*Canberra Times*, Oct. 20, 1978). The Indonesian effort to suppress the independence movement of East Timor continues, with the support of the industrial democracies. The whole affair has great importance well beyond Timor.

East Timor had never been included within the colonial or postcolonial boundaries of Indonesia and, as Forman

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points out, "Indo-Javanese and Islamic influences barely can be noted." Since World War II, he observed, the mountain people "have proclaimed repeatedly their right of self-determination," and they eagerly welcomed the steps toward independence that followed the 1974 Portuguese revolution. As soon as Portugal announced that independence would be granted to the colonies, the tiny elite of Timor formed several political parties, of which the most important were the UDT and FRETILIN.

The UN study *Decolonization* reports that though UDT was initially regarded as the most influential party, "its lack of positive policies, its associations with the 'ancien régime,' together with its initial reluctance to support the ultimate goal of full independence, led many of the party's original followers to swing their support to FRETILIN, which by early 1975 was generally considered to have become the largest party in the Territory." In August 1975 the UDT staged a coup, probably with Indonesian complicity, setting off a bloody civil war that ended a few weeks later in a complete victory for FRETILIN. The UN study estimated the number killed at 2000 to 3000. These figures are worth noting, since the United States, after reports of later Indonesian atrocities began to surface, has tried to claim that many of those killed were victims of the civil war.

The handling of the reports by the first foreign visitors after the brief civil war gives a revealing insight into the pattern of news management that has since prevailed in the United States. On September 4, 1975, the *New York Times* published an account by Gerald Stone, who was described as apparently "the first reporter allowed there [East Timor] since the fighting began." The *Times* story was actually revised and excerpted from a longer report carried by the *London Times* (Sept. 2, 1975). The modifications are instructive.

Stone attempted to verify reports of large-scale destruction and atrocities attributed primarily to FRETILIN by Indonesian propaganda and news coverage based on it, then and since. His major conclusion was that the reports of destruction were vastly exaggerated and that "many of the stories fed to the public in the past two weeks were not simply exaggerations; they were the product of a purposeful campaign to plant lies." He implicated the Portuguese, Indonesian, and Australian governments in this propaganda campaign.

In revising Stone's report for an American audience, the *New York Times* deleted his statement that there had been "much distortion" and exaggeration of the destruction, and eliminated entirely his major conclusion about the purposeful lies of Indonesian and Western propaganda. What the *New York Times* did retain was Stone's description of terrible conditions in FRETILIN hospitals (the Portuguese had withdrawn the only doctor) and maltreatment of prisoners by FRETILIN. The process of creating the required history advanced yet another step in the *Newsweek* account of the edited excerpts that appeared in the *New York Times*. According to *Newsweek*, Stone had reported "devastation," "bloodshed," and FRETILIN atrocities, and his "dispatch supported the stories of many of the 4000 refugees who have already fled Timor" (Sept. 15, 1975).

Note carefully the transition. A journalist visits the scene of reported devastation and atrocities. He finds that the reports were "filtered through the eyes of frightened and exhausted evacuees" or produced by Portuguese, Indonesian, and Australian officials, all of whom "had reason to distrust FRETILIN"—described by Western observers as a

national independence movement with a moderate reformist program. He concludes that the reports are vastly exaggerated, in fact, in large measure, propaganda fabrications.

After the *New York Times* eliminates his major conclusion and modifies others, *Newsweek* concludes that he found that the reports were true. Thus the reading public is reinforced in the belief that what *Newsweek* calls "the Marxist Fretilin party" is bent on atrocities and that liberation movements are to be viewed with horror. And the stage is set for general acquiescence when Indonesian military forces, supported by American aid, invade to "restore order." This pattern of news management persists throughout until today, with rare exceptions.

From early September until December 7, 1975, East Timor was effectively administered by FRETILIN. There were accredited Australian journalists in the territory throughout this period, as well as Australian visitors, who have given favorable accounts of the brief interlude of semi-independence. James Dunn, who is perhaps the best-placed Western observer with long experience in Timor, headed an Australian aid mission in October and reported that the FRETILIN administration was functioning effectively and "enjoyed widespread support from the population, including many hitherto UDT supporters." The Australian Parliamentarian Ken Fry has testified to the same effect before the UN Security Council. In the one major book on this period, Jill Jolliffe, who was a correspondent in East Timor at the time, concurs in this judgment. Until mid-November FRETILIN was requesting that Portuguese authorities, who had left toward the end of the brief civil war, return to complete the process of decolonization; throughout the period they requested foreign governments to send observers and fact-finding missions, but in vain.

THE INVASION

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE COMPLETE victory of FRETILIN in early September, Indonesia began its armed intervention. Indonesian border raids began on September 14. On October 16 Indonesian troops, with a few Timorese in support roles, captured the town of Balibo about 10 kilometers from the border that divides East and West Timor. (West Timor has been Indonesian since 1950.) Five Australian newsmen were killed, an effective warning to journalists of the fate that awaited them if they remained after the outright invasion, as Jolliffe comments. Eyewitness reports of Indonesian military action that were filed during this period by Australian journalists Michael Richardson, Jill Jolliffe, and Roger East received little international notice. The town of Atabae fell to Indonesian occupation on November 28, after two weeks of intensive bombardment. The expanding Indonesian attacks and lack of foreign reaction led to a decision by FRETILIN to declare independence from Portugal on November 28, 1975.

A full-scale Indonesian invasion was generally expected at that point. The United States and Australia undoubtedly knew what was about to happen. Diplomatic cables, leaked subsequently in the Australian press, reveal that in August 1975 the Australian ambassador to Jakarta had informed his government that the U.S. State Department had instructed the embassy in Jakarta "to cut down its reporting

on Timor"; and that the U.S. ambassador had expressed his view that "the U.S. should keep out of the Portuguese Timor situation and allow events to take their course," despite American influence based on Indonesia's need for U.S. military assistance. In October the Australian ambassador advised his government "that Australian knowledge of Indonesian intervention be concealed" to avoid complications with Indonesia. The primary difference between Australia and the United States in this regard is that in the United States the cover-up continues in the media as well; and of course, U.S. complicity by means of military and other support is far greater.

The U.S. government professes ignorance as to what was happening during this period, and press reports adhered closely to Indonesian propaganda. The sympathetic picture of FRETILIN administration conveyed by independent Western observers appeared nowhere in the American press, which depicted this period as one of continuing civil strife. For example, David Andelman of the *New York Times* reported from Jakarta on November 26 that Indonesians "point to their hands-off policy with respect to the civil war that is engulfing Portuguese Timor" while Indonesian destroyers "cruise the waters around Timor to prevent infiltration of arms by sea to the left-wing rebels who seized control of the colony last August." In fact, at that time the civil war had been over for more than two months, and the fighting was, rather, a limited Indonesian incursion. When Andelman wrote, Atabae had been under naval bombardment for 12 days; it fell to Indonesian forces two days later. Andelman wrote that Indonesian forces "have been showing remarkable restraint, for what is at stake [is military aid]. This "remarkable restraint" in fact existed only in the pages of America's leading newspaper.

As already noted, the Indonesian invasion of December 7 took place immediately after the departure of President Ford and Henry Kissinger from Jakarta. The *New York Times* headline on December 8 announced that "Indonesians Hold Portuguese Timor after Incursion." Indonesian forces in fact held only the capital city of Dili, which they had captured with considerable barbarism. The difference is significant. The U.S. government has consistently been claiming that the fighting is essentially over, and that we must accept Indonesian annexation as a fact of life. The *Times* also reported falsely that the civil war (which had ended in early September) had been proceeding until the "incursion" and that Indonesia had been offering "no material assistance to the anti-Fretilin forces." In a perverse sense, the latter claim is true: That is, since Indonesia was itself conducting the military operations, while falsely alleging that "anti-Fretilin forces" were doing so, it is true, technically, that Indonesia was not offering "military assistance to the anti-Fretilin forces."

The *New York Times* persisted in the same distortions in an editorial condemnation of Indonesian aggression, maintaining that "To be fair, there was provocation in the unilateral declaration of independence last month by the leftist Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, known as Fretilin, which had seemed to be winning the civil war handily against pro-Indonesian forces until Jakarta began to intervene." Recall that Indonesia had not "seized" East Timor but rather held only the capital city. FRETILIN did not "seem" to be winning the civil war, but had won it by early September; Indonesia then began its intervention, not in support of "pro-Indonesian forces," but on its own. The editors of the *Times* did not explain why

the declaration of independence was a "provocation" to Indonesia, which had no claims to East Timor, and they said nothing about the Indonesian "provocation" of the preceding months. The *Times* also added that "The real losers are Portuguese Timor's 620,000 inhabitants, whose interests and desires have been ignored by all parties to this deplorable affair"—including the independence forces. Perhaps similar sentiments were expressed by thoughtful British commentators in July 1776.

AMERICAN AID

THE U.S. GOVERNMENT CLAIMS TO HAVE suspended military assistance to Indonesia from December 1975 until June 1976. This turns out to have been as much of a fraud as the pretense of ignorance as to what was happening. Military aid during this period actually was above what the State Department had originally proposed to Congress, and it has increased since. Furthermore, at least four new aid offers were made during this period, despite congressional testimony to the contrary by representatives of the State Department and the Pentagon. The offers included supplies and parts for OV-10 Broncos, which are "specially designed for counterinsurgency operations against adversaries without effective anti-aircraft weapons, and wholly useless for defending Indonesia against a foreign enemy"; this was pointed out in congressional testimony by Cornell University Professor Benedict Anderson, who added that this policy has continued without substantial change through the Carter administration. The "aid suspension" was secret—so secret, in fact, that the Indonesian government was never informed of it. Virtually none of this has been discussed in the national media.

In congressional testimony, the deputy legal adviser of the State Department, George Aldrich, conceding that the Indonesians "were armed roughly 90 percent with our equipment," contended that "... we really did not know very much. Maybe we did not want to know very much, but I gather that for a time we did not know." As to this "ignorance," it is a fact that the West generally, and the United States specifically, does not want to know, preferring that the issue be quickly "buried," as Representative Burke has urged, forgotten along with the mass graves and demolished villages of East Timor.

The official U.S. government view is "that resolution of the matter would be best reached by the parties directly involved—the Indonesians, the Portuguese and the Timorese." The legitimacy of the Indonesian "involvement" is precisely what is at issue; the Portuguese strenuously opposed the Indonesian involvement; the Timorese government that was in de facto control of the territory, apart from the border areas already conquered by Indonesia, certainly opposed the invasion—with substantial popular support so far as is known—and continues to oppose it insofar as possible. Thus the official U.S. position amounts to accepting Indonesian aggression and its consequences, whatever the attitudes of the other "parties directly involved," and surely irrespective of the attitudes of the primary party, the people of East Timor themselves. Again, the media have been silent on these matters.

As for the continuing flow of U.S. arms, the country officer for Indonesia in the State Department, David T.

Kennedy, testified before Congress that one purpose is "to keep that area peaceful"—this, in testimony on the Indonesian invasion of East Timor. Another State Department representative, at hearings just last February, conceded that the conflict persists; he noted, however, "a certain change in the situation," in that a large number of people have moved from areas where they were "under the control of Fretilin to areas where they could be protected by the Indonesian government." Or to translate into plain English: They have fled the merciless attack supplied and concealed by the U.S. government. The cynicism of the government formulations are matched only by those of the press, as we shall see directly.

ATROCITIES

INDONESIA HAS BEEN ATTEMPTING TO conquer East Timor since December 1975, but so far without success. In July 1976, the United States recognized the formal incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia, after a farcical "People's Council" was formed. The State Department legal representative George Aldrich testified that "We actually know very little about the selection process for these delegates [to the People's Council], although the process itself took place at a time of military occupation by Indonesia during which considerable fighting was still going on." Actually, the U.S. government knows all that need be known about the "selection process," but it is striking that on the basis of this professed ignorance the government was willing to recognize the takeover while fully aware that fighting continued, "renewing" arms shipments that had never been halted. While the government professes ignorance about the facts, it is clear about American interests. The State Department legal adviser stated that the United States did not question the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia because it was "an accomplished fact" and "such a policy would not serve our best interests in light of the importance of our relations with Indonesia."

In March 1977, nine months after "integration," David Kennedy testified that about 200,000 of the 650,000 people of East Timor "would be considered in areas under Indonesian administration"—an assessment that contrasts strikingly with the American government's claim that the war was essentially over in early 1976, and that "Timor has effectively become a part of Indonesia." Kennedy testified further that the people are happy with integration: "They have decided their best interest lies, at this time, in incorporation with Indonesia." Their "decision" was expressed in the fraudulent "People's Council." Of course, there were still the two-thirds of the population who had not yet been able to express their "decision" because they were not under Indonesian administration—or to put it in the terms favored by the State Department, because they were not as yet "protected" by Indonesia.

The Indonesian attempt to conquer East Timor has been a story of mounting atrocities, attested to by refugee reports, church officials, letters that have been smuggled out, and other sources. Virtually all independent observers estimate the numbers slaughtered as in the range of 50,000 to 100,000. The foreign minister of Indonesia, Adam Malik, estimated the number killed as "50,000 people or perhaps 80,000" (*Age*, April 1, 1977). But, he added, "what does

this mean if compared with 600,000 people who want to join Indonesia? Then what is the big fuss? It is possible that they may have been killed by Australians and not us. Who knows? It was war" (*Canberra Times*, April 1, 1977).

The silence in the U.S. media over this admission is remarkable, no less so than the silence accorded the report by Indonesian church officials, who visited East Timor in late 1976. These officials, who strongly support "integration" and oppose FRETILIN, found that 500,000 people were not under Indonesian military control and that local priests estimated the numbers killed at 100,000. The officials describe a town of 5000 that allegedly had welcomed the Indonesian troops—though a year later only 1000 people remained in the village, the rest having joined FRETILIN in the mountains. They report that of the 30,000 people in the capital city of Díli, the one place where there may have been some initial willingness to accept the Indonesian invasion, 20,000 want to leave for Portugal, and others are now with FRETILIN. Neither this nor other information to the same effect has appeared in the American media, even though the Australian Parliament's legislative research service described the report of the church officials as "significant and disturbing" and concluded that there is "mounting evidence" that the Indonesians have carried out "indiscriminate killing on a scale unprecedented in post-World War II history."

I cannot review here the evidence supporting this judgment, but it is ample. How has the American press responded? The *New York Times* index gives a good indication. In the year 1975, when the fate of the Portuguese colonies was a matter of much concern in the West, Timor received six full columns in the annual index. In 1976, when the Indonesian army was beginning the "annihilation of simple mountain people," coverage dropped to half a column. In 1977, when this massacre was reaching truly awesome proportions, coverage dropped to five lines.

THE COVER-UP

ON THE RARE OCCASIONS WHEN THE PRESS has deigned to refer to this "indiscriminate killing on a scale unprecedented in post-World War II history," it has followed the U.S. government in pretending that the killings took place largely during the civil war. On February 15, 1976, the *New York Times* devoted all of 150 words to a report that "About 60,000 people have been killed since the outbreak of civil war in Portuguese Timor last August, according to the deputy chairman of the territory's provisional government"—that is, the government installed by the Indonesian army. The *Times* report went on to say the FRETILIN had been fighting "forces favoring union with Indonesia." Recall that in the civil war perhaps 2000 to 3000 people were killed, a fact that was not reported by the *Times*.

Thus the remainder of the estimated 60,000 were victims of the U.S.-backed Indonesian invasion. As for the forces "favoring union with Indonesia," these had been defeated in September and played no significant part in the subsequent fighting. These forces did not, for the most part, favor such union, certainly not prior to their defeat in September 1975 and probably not thereafter—if we discount the effects of Indonesian coercion. The fact that the *Times* found it necessary to devote only 150 words to this

massacre is revealing, as is the falsification of the facts, and the remark, attributed to their source with no comment, that "the war is virtually over" in February 1976. The war continues, while the American press maintains its silence.

James Dunn presented evidence of Indonesian atrocities in congressional hearings in March 1977, based on his interviews with Timorese refugees in Portugal. His testimony was reported, but the story quickly died. The U.S. press, which is assiduous in seeking out refugee reports alleging atrocities in countries that have escaped U.S. domination, has yet to interview these refugees; nor have they appeared before Congress, though Dunn reported that they were eager to testify. Occasionally the U.S. press reports the plight of the refugees in Portugal, carefully avoiding, however, anything they might have to reveal about Timor (e.g., *New York Times*, Oct. 24, 1976).

One can find an occasional indication in the press that something ugly may be happening in Timor. Thus, the *New York Times* carried a nine-line Reuters dispatch (March 1, 1977) on a petition to President Carter by the majority of the Australian Parliament, "charging atrocities by Indonesian troops" and asking President Carter "to comment publicly on the situation in East Timor." But nine lines were evidently considered too many for a topic of such meager significance. The story did not make it to the *New York Times* index because it was deleted from the Late City Edition, which is the newspaper of record for microfilm and for history. *Times* editors and correspondents are much too busy seeking evidence of communist atrocities to bother with the possible massacre of 100,000 Timorese at the hands of a U.S. client using American arms.

Robert Shaplen, the noted Asia correspondent for the *New Yorker*, commented briefly on East Timor in his "Letter from Indonesia" of December 12, 1977. According to his reconstruction of history, "Indonesian troops intervened, somewhat crudely and clumsily, in December of 1975, in a war for independence which the East Timorese were ostensibly waging against Portugal." The idea that the East Timorese were fighting Portugal is a novel contribution, but the reference to the massacre of thousands of people as a somewhat crude and clumsy intervention is typical of the press. Shaplen claims that "the so-called Fight for Freedom" from Portugal, which exists only in his imagination, "turned into a civil war" among several factions, of which one, "the left-wing Fretilin, objected strenuously to the manner in which Indonesian troops moved in to take over the former colony"—an interesting way to refer to the resistance struggle against Indonesian aggression.

"According to neutral observers," Shaplen continues, "some ten thousand East Timorese, including many civilians, were killed by the Indonesian forces. . . ." In fact, "neutral observers" and even those who are pro-Indonesian and anti-FRETELIN have consistently offered figures five to ten times that high, and only the U.S. State Department has given the estimate that Shaplen attributes to "neutral observers." His reference suggests that he is simply passing "information" from some U.S. government source, identified as "neutral"—not an uncommon practice, unfortunately. Shaplen concludes that the Indonesians "don't seem particularly perturbed by the criticisms" that they receive from "many Third World nations," which is natural, given the support they receive from the First World industrial societies and their journalists. He also reports an announcement by General Suharto that "On December 31st [1977], the Army will start a new campaign against the

guerrillas," a matter that is of little concern to that observer or his colleagues in the American press.

I have mentioned a few of the many examples of direct reports of atrocities that have been systematically excluded from the American press. A final example is a UPI dispatch from Singapore (*Australian*, Oct. 8, 1977) reporting that "30,000 Indonesian troops are still roaming East Timor slaying men, women and children." The report was based on the account of a French photojournalist, Denis Reichle of *Paris Match*, who was deported from Timor after a six-day visit to a mountain retreat of FRETELIN in East Timor. Reichle gave "a safe estimate" of 70,000 to 75,000 East Timorese killed by the Indonesians in 18 months of combat. The Indonesians, he reported, did not seek combat with FRETELIN forces, but "were 'systematically wiping out' the populations of villages known or suspected to be FRETELIN supporters and destroying FRETELIN supply lines and sources." "He said Catholic missionaries, led by the Bishop of Atambua [in Indonesian Timor], were the only voices in Timor trying to stop the 'systematic killing-off of East Timorese.'" The bishop, he said, "had been trying to get an interview with Indonesia's President Suharto for two and a half months, but his requests had so far been ignored." He also reported that "a German priest had been driven insane by the constant killings in his area." In contrast to fairy tales about a "civil war" in which "pro-Indonesian forces" had defeated FRETELIN, this eyewitness report by a Western journalist did not reach the U.S. media.

REFUGEES

UNABLE TO PROVIDE FOOD AND MEDICAL treatment to a population of half a million under the circumstances described, FRETELIN is encouraging refugees to move to Indonesian-controlled areas, according to James Dunn, who wrote: "It was therefore not surprising to learn that many of the population were encouraged by Fretilin to return to towns and villages under Indonesian control."

We have already seen how these facts are interpreted by U.S. government spokesmen, who speak of the flow of refugees to areas where they can be "protected" by the Indonesian army. The press, once again, adheres strictly to the State Department version of events. Henry Kamm reported on the refugee flow in the *New York Times* (April 19, 1978) in the following terms: "The diminishing of supplies of the Fretilin guerrillas appears to have caused them to lose much of their hold over the significant part of the population of about 600,000 whom they have forced to live in regions under their control." How does Kamm know that the population has been "forced to live" under FRETELIN "control"? How are the "scattered Fretilin groups," who barely exist, according to the Indonesian propaganda ministry and the *New York Times*, able to exert control over the population? These questions do not arise. It is a matter of doctrine, not fact, that FRETELIN must have "forced" the population to live under their control, and that they are now fleeing to areas where they can be "protected" by the Indonesians. It is hardly imaginable that the distinguished correspondent of the *New York Times*—who had just won a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting of the suffering of refugees from communism in Southeast Asia when this dispatch appeared—would report the observa-

tion by Denis Reichle after his visit to East Timor: FRETILIN forces "are simply East Timorese who would rather die fighting than submit to what they consider to be Indonesian slavery."

The *Times's* Pulitzer Prize-winning specialist on victims of communism does not provide the source for his insight into the minds of the refugees fleeing from the regions where they have been "forced to live" by the "scattered Fretilin groups." Perhaps it was General Ali Moertopo, Indonesia's information minister, the military officer in charge of the early stages of the Indonesian invasion. He is quoted without any qualification as saying that the lack of security that requires Indonesia to keep foreigners away is not caused by FRETILIN forces (which are supposed to be virtually nonexistent, according to the propaganda line of Indonesia, the United States, and the U.S. media) "but from antiforeign feelings among Timorese, the origin of which he did not explain. 'When they see a foreigner they have a prejudice and would make moves that make trouble,' [General Moertopo] said." Westerners have often been baffled by what they call the "xenophobia" of Asian peasants and tribesmen, a phenomenon, not yet explained by modern anthropology, which seems to arise among groups that are subjected to saturation bombing, forced population removal, and other modes of "protection" designed by their foreign benefactors.

Henry Kamm goes on to say that the international backing for FRETILIN "appears to be limited to highly vocal groups of Australian leftwing students who have made of eastern Timor an issue similar to Vietnam, with Indonesia playing the American role." His comparison of Timor and Vietnam is illuminating. Though this has escaped the *Times's* Asia specialist, the protest over Indonesian exploits in Timor includes the majority of states in the United Nations, the majority of the Australian Parliament, the Australian labor movement, church groups, and many others. In the interest of burying American complicity in the massacre as quickly as possible, however, it is expedient for the press to pretend that only highly vocal left-wing students are trying to whip up opposition to the Indonesian invasion, as they did, in such an annoying fashion, during the American war in Vietnam.

One of the protesters is Michael Hodgman, a strongly anticommunist Australian MP who had specifically denounced the effort to identify opposition to Indonesian aggression as a left-wing plot. In February 1977, he wrote that "For us, as Australians, to bury our heads in the sand and turn our backs on what is alleged to have occurred, would be a gross act of national moral cowardice . . . future generations would have to bear the same shame and disgrace which fell upon those citizens of Nazi Germany who turned a blind eye to Auschwitz . . ." How much more true is this of American congressmen, journalists, and the public, given the direct American role in implementing the aggression, with its deadly consequences, and building a wall of silence around it. More recently, Hodgman charged in Parliament that 30,000 to 40,000 people have died in East Timor because defoliants destroyed their crops. His allegation received 33 words in the Manchester-London *Guardian* (Sept. 14, 1978)—thirty-three more than it has received in the United States, to my knowledge. Representative Donald Fraser of Minnesota wrote to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance on December 8, 1977, citing "a reliable report that Indonesian forces have been using chemical sprays on crops in areas under Fretilin control and that U.S.-manu-

factured planes, the ov-10s, are being used to spread these chemicals." The State Department responded that it believed the report to be erroneous. The press has not been sufficiently interested to inquire.

I mentioned earlier Robert Shaplen's off-hand remark that Indonesia planned a new offensive in December 1977. A report by the Asia correspondent of the *Los Angeles Times*, George McArthur, adds some highly significant information (*Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 25, 1977). He quotes a Western diplomat as saying that the Indonesians "are running out of military inventory. The operations on Timor have pushed them to the wall." Indonesian arms supplies have been virtually exhausted, according to this report, even though "the guerrillas now number only about 600 men." McArthur does not explain how a war against 600 men can exhaust the military supplies of Indonesia, but people not constrained by the conventions of American journalism can perhaps draw some inferences. McArthur then reports that arms salesmen from the major Western industrial nations are attempting to pour arms into Indonesia, adding falsely that the Carter administration is "slowing the international sales of armaments."

But his remark about Western arms salesmen is quite accurate; the major arms suppliers do not wish to miss the opportunity to take part in the glorious adventure in East Timor, where Indonesian arms supplies have been virtually exhausted in a war against 600 scattered men. In April 1978 British Aerospace signed a contract with Indonesia for Hawk ground attack/trainer aircraft, well designed for counterinsurgency. The French foreign minister, on a visit to Jakarta in September 1978, reported plans for substantial armaments sales, adding in response to a query that France would not place Indonesia in an embarrassing position in any manner at the United Nations (*Le Monde*, Sept. 14, 1978). The announcement that France too will join in the ravaging of East Timor aroused no great indignation in France, to my knowledge. The Carter administration, meanwhile, had requested a sizable increase in military assistance to Indonesia for fiscal 1978 (*New York Times*, July 17, 1977).

HUMAN RIGHTS

TO CONCLUDE THIS SURVEY, LET US TURN to the human rights reports of the State Department. In the March 1977 report, covering the period when Indonesia launched its murderous attack, there is no mention whatsoever of Timor. The omission is rectified in the 1978 report, which deals with allegations of genocide in Timor as follows, in toto:

Questions have been raised concerning atrocities by Indonesian troops in East Timor in 1975 and 1976 prior to the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia. The Indonesian Government withdrew and disciplined offending units guilty of individual excesses, but most of the human losses in East Timor appear to have occurred prior to Indonesia's intervention.

The final statement is a disgraceful falsehood. No less disgraceful is the refusal even to concede that questions have been raised concerning atrocities after July 1976, let alone to consider the substantial evidence supporting the allegations that there have been massive atrocities and that the

The fact that the State Department report "was gentle on alleged atrocities in East Timor, asserting that most lives were lost before Indonesia's intervention in the former Portuguese colony," was reported in the *New York Times* (Feb. 10, 1978). Neither the reporter nor the editors commented on the glaring falsity of this claim or on the significance of the State Department cover-up; nor did they mention that the Carter administration had been stepping up military aid to Indonesia.

The subsequent history shows that this assessment is accurate. I will not review the UN record, but will merely note that two years later, the United States voted against a UN General Assembly resolution calling on the UN Special Committee on Decolonization to send a mission to the territory. This vote again was significant, in the light of the fact that Indonesia was preparing for a new military offensive at that time. The United States was joined by Japan and other countries that, as the *Christian Science Monitor* reported (Dec. 8, 1977), “seek close political and economic ties with Indonesia.”

A COMPARISON

perhaps 100,000 people have been slaughtered since April 1975. In addition, it is alleged by the same critics that perhaps a million have died from starvation and disease, but although the Western press is careful to hide the fact, such deaths are chargeable in significant measure to the American account.

We have here two paired examples of comparable allegations concerning major violations of human rights. For Westerners concerned with human rights, the case of East Timor is, obviously, of vastly greater significance. Whatever the situation may be in Cambodia, it is beyond the reach of Western human rights activists. But the case of East Timor is radically different. Even a show of displeasure by the great power that provided 90 percent of the arms for the Indonesian invasion and that continues to provide Indonesia with material and diplomatic support for its depredations while laboring to conceal them, would be likely to have significant effects. The same is true of the other powers that are working to bury the issue as quickly and completely as possible, as they seek to join in the bloodshed by supplying arms themselves. For Westerners who speak of human rights out of genuine moral concern, then, it is quite obvious that the case of East Timor should be the focus of far greater attention than alleged atrocities in Cambodia.

The difference in international reaction is revealing. Specifically, it reveals how empty and hypocritical is much of the "human rights" clamor in the West. It teaches us something about the meaning of the sudden concern for "human rights" that has moved to center stage just at the moment when the luster of classical colonialist and interventionist ideologies has dimmed.

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